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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000208

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DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#) [SU](#) [CD](#) [UN](#) [US](#)  
SUBJECT: REBELS' DESTINY IN THEIR HANDS

REF: A. NDJAMENA 00119

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 00170

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) On February 7, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) completed the airlift of many Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatory commanders to attend the leadership conference in North Darfur. Some additional commanders may move to the conference site by ground in the coming days. Commanders allied with the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)-Unity/G-19, the faction allied with SLA leader Abdel Wahid al-Nur, and the faction allied with SLA leader Ahmed Abdul Shafi have assembled in Umm Rai, North Darfur. After numerous delays, the organizers appear to be awaiting the outcome of a parallel meeting in Chad, but have invited international observers to attend the conference on February [1](#)19.

[1](#)2. (C) Field reporting indicates that many of the commanders assembled in North Darfur are frustrated with their political leaders, are tired of the ongoing fighting, and are ripe for pursuing political dialogue. Their destiny, however, is in their hands. In order to move forward and participate in a constructive political process, they need to overcome their internal divisions, develop a common stance on the issues of regime change and the DPA, and counter the manipulation of their leaders, which is rooted in individual political ambition.

[1](#)3. (C) One element of the conference has said it will focus on unification of the SLA, humanitarian affairs, legal and security work, and native administration. A second element, led by Abdul Shafi, has refused to renounce his goal of regime change in Khartoum, continues to reject the DPA as a basis for negotiation, and may use the conference to facilitate unification of the SLM with this goal in mind (Ref A). Also in question is the political and military strength of a united rebel movement that might emerge from the conference. Adam Bakhit -- who commands the largest number of fighters in any faction -- remains in Chad with influential non-signatory leaders Khalil Ibrahim, Khamis Abdullah, Sharif Harir, Adam Ali Shoggar, and Ahmed Diraij (Ref B). This third element plans to hold a separate conference in Chad within the next week to consolidate the NRF.

[1](#)4. (C) Using the occasion of UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim's visit to Sudan from February 12-16, we can encourage the UN and AU to take a more active and consistent role vis-a-vis the non-signatories and assist them in developing a structure for their internal dialogue. In addition to meeting with Sudanese officials, signatories

of the Declaration of Commitment (DOC), and representatives of the international community in Khartoum, Eliasson and Salim intend to travel to El Fasher for consultations with the non-signatories.

15. (C) While the international community should support any positive movement toward peaceful negotiation, it should be careful not to expect either the conference in North Darfur or the meetings in Chad to be a watershed in the political process. The USG can continue to state our policy of support for unification of the rebel factions and negotiation within the framework of the DPA to demonstrate to the AU, UN, the international community, and the Sudanese government that we are firm in our commitment to peace.

16. (U) A statement of our policy should be based on S/E Natsios' February 8 prepared congressional testimony to include the following:

-- Our first objective in Darfur is to achieve a durable peace through a political settlement that is agreed to by all parties voluntarily, and then actually implemented. If we achieve an agreement that is not supported by all sides, we will see war again in a few years. Each recurrence of war puts civilian lives in danger and causes a decline in the already chaotic economic situation in Darfur, further destabilizing the vulnerable populations. The Sudanese government policy of divide and conquer cannot succeed, and will only prolong the war. The strategy of the Khartoum government to negotiate individually with each rebel leader to buy their support will not create a cohesive and lasting peace.

-- The DPA non-signatories must unify politically in order to negotiate effectively a political settlement with the

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Khartoum government. Some rebels frequently appear more focused on their political ambitions than on the well-being of the people of Darfur. Continued fragmentation only exacerbates the Sudanese government's efforts to exploit pre-existing tribal divisions.

-- While the people of the United States are appalled by the atrocities committed against the people of Darfur, the rebels should not translate that into support for their political movements, many of which are personality-based and the goals of which are obscure.

-- The DPA non-signatories should renounce the violent overthrow of the government of Sudan, which many of them have been publicly advocating, and which is an impediment to peace negotiations.

-- The United States believes that the United Nations and the African Union, under Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim, should take the lead in mediating a political agreement between the rebels and the Sudanese government, and that the United States will do everything possible to support them in this process. Use of more than one track for negotiation in this case would be damaging and confusing for all parties; we support join UN/AU leadership in this regard.

-- Attacks on international aid agencies have increased in recent months with more than a dozen local Sudanese staff killed, one expatriate woman sexually assaulted, and approximately 113 aid vehicles stolen in 2006. We also know that the rebel movements have been responsible for at least some of this theft and violence, and we insist that it stop now. The United States government pays for much of the assistance, and we view this as tantamount to stealing taxpayer-funded U.S. government resources. Moreover, if the abuse on aid agencies continues, they will leave, and the people of Darfur will suffer on an even greater scale. The rebels are as responsible as the Government of Sudan in ensuring the security of those delivering humanitarian

assistance.

-- The non-signatories must be flexible and practical about their demands in any upcoming negotiations; they will not get everything they ask for. They must be willing to compromise.

-- While the DPA has weaknesses, it cannot be abandoned; it should be the basis of future negotiations, and addenda to address some of the DPA's weaknesses should be offered, not negotiation of a new agreement.

-- Finally, the U.S. will support the implementation of a peace agreement, along with other international donors, by providing significant reconstruction assistance to both African and Arab tribes in Darfur so that people are able to return home and re-establish their lives and livelihoods successfully.

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